



## Executive Summary of a FINAL INTERNAL EVALUATION

May 2017

Project title:

### Support to Border Police in Addressing Increased Migration Flows along the Western Balkan Route

This one-year immigration and border management (IBM) project implemented by IOM Serbia aimed to contribute to national migration management efforts after a surge in mixed migration flows in early 2015, when the Western Balkan route became an important route for irregular migration to the European Union.

The project was designed to improve capacities for processing, registration and referral of migrants and refugees, including preparedness and capacities to ensure effective protection services, by increasing the technical capacities of the Border Police Directorate of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior (MoI) through three outputs: **humanitarian border management trainings** for border police, direct migrant assistance using **IOM mobile teams**, and procurement of specialized **equipment**.

<i>Country:</i>	Serbia
<i>Project type:</i>	Immigration and Border Management (IBM)
<i>Project code:</i>	TC.0933 (IOM)
<i>Project period:</i>	31 March 2016 to 30 March 2017
<i>Beneficiaries:</i>	Border Police Directorate of the Serbian Ministry of Interior (MoI)
<i>Donor:</i>	Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Geneva
<i>Budget:</i>	USD 900,000

This is an **executive summary of a final evaluation** of the project "Support to Border Police in Addressing Increased Migration Flows along the Western Balkan Route." More details can be found in the full evaluation report.

This was an **internal, independent evaluation** was carried out by Sarah Harris, Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for the IOM Regional Office in Vienna. The field visit took place during 21-22 March 2017 and the final report was completed in May 2017.

**Evaluation purpose:** The overall purpose of this evaluation was to assess whether and how the project met its goals and to identify other relevant issues, including the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project. Besides the intended direct effects of the project, the evaluation also aimed to assess the broader context, including potential indirect or unintended effects, relationships to other projects, as well as cross-cutting issues. IOM Serbia commissioned the evaluation to identify what worked and what did not and why.

**Evaluation criteria:** The evaluation assessed the main OECD-DAC criteria of *relevance* and *effectiveness* in the fulfilment of intended results, the *efficiency* of the project implementation, the likely *impact* and the potential for *sustainability*. Additionally, the evaluation considered cross-cutting issues of *gender* and *rights*, and assessed the *outlook* in terms of the need and potential for follow-up projects and recommendations for future actions.

**Intended evaluation users:** The evaluation will be used by the Mission and by IBM thematic specialists to identify best practices and lessons learned and to help improve ongoing and future projects in Serbia and beyond. The evaluation will also benefit senior management to assess organizational effectiveness and to enhance organizational learning, and enhance accountability to donors and stakeholders and demonstrate the value of the project and their support.

**Evaluation methodology:** Desk review, key informant interviews, and direct observation. The evaluator met with partners in Belgrade and visited a border crossing point in Sid, including a visit to the reception centre, border police unit and IOM mobile team.

## Global IOM activities

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration globally and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. With 166 member states, 8 states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants.

In support of IOM objectives, **immigration and border management (IBM) activities** are directed at helping governments develop improved policy, legislation, administrative structures, operational systems and the human resource base to respond more effectively to diverse migration and border challenges and to institute good migration governance. Such activities are designed as partnerships, with the requesting government and other relevant interlocutors working closely with IOM to identify needs, determine priority areas, and shape and deliver interventions. Since realities on the ground and the goals of governments and other actors in migration management change over time in both nature and priority, IBM activities continuously evolve to meet new migration challenges on the national, regional and international levels.



### Project context

Starting in 2015, Serbia experienced a surge in mixed migration flows as the Western Balkan Route became an important route for irregular migration to the European Union. This placed a heavy burden on the Western Balkans countries, demanding increased technical capacities of border police for processing and registration of migrants and refugees. They faced issues of hindered development, weak welfare systems and limited institutional capacities. There had been a noted increase of irregular migrants, which puts extraordinary pressure on state services and institutions, especially those dealing with accommodation, care, reception, and other related services. It was determined that increasing irregular migration flows in the longer term, both locally and regionally, would require better preparedness and capacities to ensure effective protection services. **In response**, IOM implemented the project "Support to Border Police in Addressing Increased Migration Flows along the Western Balkan Route" to support the Border Police Directorate of Serbia's Ministry of Interior (MoI) in providing effective responses to these challenges.

The Western Balkan route was closed in March 2016, resulting in fewer arrivals and increasing use of alternative routes through irregular entry and exit points. Irregular entries increased along the border with Bulgaria and FYROM (approx. 300 entries per day), and an increase in exit points along borders with Hungary and Croatia. Migrants and refugees were also exposed to more cross-border smuggling networks and traffickers. Still, the originally identified needs persisted due to an uncertain political and migratory situation in Serbia as well as neighbouring countries. While registration became less necessary than when the route was open, there was still a need to support national capacities in this area.

When the **project was revised in June 2016**, it was determined by the project team in coordination with the Border Police Directorate and the donor that the intended results (objective, outcome and outputs) remained relevant. At the same time, a few adjustments were made to the activities and the budget to remain relevant and respond to emerging needs.

## Project design

This project aimed to improve management of mixed migration flows in the context of the migration crisis by increasing technical capacities of border police, specifically by focusing on trainings to border police, direct services to migrants using IOM mobile teams, and procurement of specialized equipment.

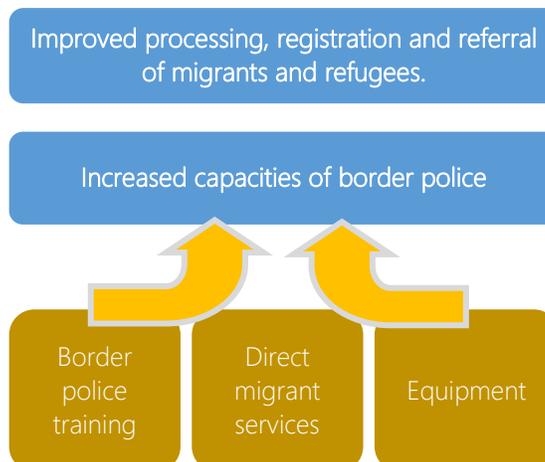
It should be noted that the intended results stayed the same throughout implementation, despite changes in migration flows after the Western Balkan route through Serbia was closed in March 2016. The relevance section of the findings describes the continued relevance of the project design.

The **objective** of the project was:

To contribute to MoI efforts in managing mixed migration flows by increasing the capacities for processing, registration and referral of migrants and refugees.

To contribute to that objective, the intended **outcome** of the project was that:

Border police possess increased technical capacities to receive and process mixed migration flows.



Three **outputs** were designed to facilitate achievement of the above outcome:

**1. Border police training:** Border police staff sensitized and trained in profiling, and referral to assistance for migrants and refugees

**2. Migrant services:** Information provision, support to registration process and translation services available to facilitate communication with migrants/refugees as well as to increase transportation assistance

**3. Equipment:** Border police equipment updated and increased

## Conclusions

The main conclusions are summarized below according to the evaluation criteria:

### *Relevance:*

- The project was aligned with national needs, priorities and existing border management measures, and outputs delivered by the project were consistent with intended outcome and objective: to contribute to MoI efforts in managing mixed migration flows by increasing the technical capacities of the border police for processing, registration and referral of migrants and refugees. The project remained relevant even following closure of the Western Balkan route, and it was designed to build on and complement other IOM projects aimed at increasing capacities for managing mixed migration flows in Serbia.

### *Effectiveness:*

- The three outputs (trainings for border police on humanitarian border management, support to IOM mobile teams at reception centres and border crossing points, and equipment procurement for the Border Police Directorate) were successfully achieved through close coordination with government partners, deployment of IOM mobile teams based on evolving migration dynamics, and IOM's flexible and responsive procurement of equipment to ensure continued relevance to evolving needs and to meet technical specifications. All planned activities were on track to be completed and outputs delivered within the project implementation period (ending on 30 March 2017) at the time of the evaluation field visit, except for a final official handover ceremony, which at the request of the Japanese Embassy was held in April 2017.
- **Output 1: Humanitarian border management trainings.** The trainings improved knowledge and skills related to migrant rights, protection standards and specific vulnerabilities, and suggested practical ways to apply the learning to concrete situations. Trainees were pleased with training content and methods, highlighting the humanitarian border management concept, which was new to them, as well as the usefulness of practical exercises and exchange with colleagues from other border points. They reported being able to immediately apply the skills and knowledge in their daily work, and clarity on which actors to work with and the respective mandates, because of which they feel better equipped to practically respond to challenges of managing mixed migration flows. The trainers (higher-level border police officials) also shared positive feedback and noted institutional ownership and support of the trainings, which is incorporated in their academy's training portfolio and which they are now also promoting among non-border police units. The training package was designed jointly by IOM the MoI, ensuring the content and methods are appropriate and useful, though practical exercises will need to be updated in future as migration dynamics and needs evolve.
- **Output 2: IOM mobile teams.** Teams are present daily in all reception centres, enabling them to work closely with the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, which runs the centres, and respond quickly to any needs or situations that may arise. The teams combine various profiles to provide transportation, health assistance, interpretation and information services, in addition to situation monitoring and tracking. Other actors are present, but generally not every day. In this regard, IOM mobile teams play a key role in responding to a need for improved assistance to migrants and refugees, including vulnerable migrants. In terms of impact and sustainability, the IOM mobile teams provide crucial and much needed direct assistance, but appear to have been planned and implemented only as a short-term gap filling measure without any aspect of longer term capacity building of government or other partners. Continued donor funding is needed to support their operation.

- **Output 3: Equipment.** Procurement remained responsive to needs, shifting from an initial focus on the need for registration equipment and transport for large groups of migrants arriving at border points, and then shifting to more border surveillance after the route through Serbia was closed. The project provided the government with 11 terrain vehicles, three vans and 68 sets of computers and printers. The Government of Japan through its Embassy in Belgrade provided crucial support by facilitating resolution of the VAT exemption issue and quickly approving changes to procurement plans. IOM staff remained in close coordination with the MoI to ensure that equipment met needs and specifications, and the MoI also worked with IOM to make simpler specifications that IOM could meet more effectively and efficiently. The modalities of funding from the Government of Japan also enabled flexible allocation of equipment to border crossing points based on needs. This is key given the wider development goals that the MoI is striving to address. The MoI is constantly assessing priorities and checking to avoid overlap among funding provided, and aims to ensure support provided for the migration crisis will feed into or complement longer-term development needs. However, constraints are imposed by some donors in the context of the migration crisis, in terms of what needs to fund and what border points to support, which poses challenges in terms of meeting basic equipment needs (air conditioners, uniforms, etc.) and ensuring balanced coverage of needs among all border points.

#### *Cross-cutting issues:*

- Although no rights-based or gender analysis was apparent, beyond citing large numbers of vulnerable migrants, nor were there any gender-specific or rights-based results, indicators or gender-disaggregated data, it can be understood implicitly that improper migration management has adverse effects on migrant rights. Project activities (promoting humanitarian border management and sending mobile teams to reception centres and border points to respond to needs of vulnerable migrants) were clearly designed to improve respect, protection and fulfillment of migrant rights. IOM mobile teams were present daily in all reception centres, enabling them to respond to needs as they arise. Finally, keeping in mind the emergency/crisis context, IOM staff reported limited time and resources for in-depth analysis, and that government and donors insisted on immediate reaction and activities in line with the national response plan.

#### *Impact:*

- This project had a limited scope in terms of the breadth of needs related to improving migration management. The project was designed to address migration management challenges related to a migration crisis context, in line with a national response plan that focused primarily on providing immediate humanitarian assistance, rather than to strengthen the policy level and overall migration management framework. Therefore, while this project, broader and longer-term impacts in relation to migration management were not the focus of this project. Still, the project did contribute in a small part to improving migration management by complementing existing border management measures and other efforts to improve migration management, including various other IOM projects.

#### *Sustainability:*

- The equipment provided by the project will have long-lasting benefits. The government counterparts noted that the equipment provided was of high-quality and met the specifications required, and a full handover of the equipment was already carried out and a formal ceremony held in April 2017. As for the trainings, border police representatives indicated they will continue to use the curriculum by incorporating it into their existing training portfolio to provide education for all police staff, and can deliver in future based on needs and requests from the field. This indicates strong ownership and institutionalization of the trainings.

## Outlook:

- Looking forward, there is now more of a need to improve standards in reception centres rather than increasing the reception capacity, in line with the fact that flows have decreased and the stranded migrants present in the country are staying for longer periods of time. At the time of evaluation there were 16 reception centres, of which eight were new since December 2016, and some reportedly had insufficient conditions. Migrants were increasingly willing to discuss options for AVRR with IOM staff since late 2016, as they are seeing fewer options following rejection for asylum claims, push-backs and the growing time stranded in Serbia. Equipment is always needed, and the specific equipment needs are always evolving. There is also interest by the government to further scale up the trainings and expand them to a wider audience. Finally, border police staff requested support for cultural awareness and language training to improve interactions and responses to migrants and refugees.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations for IOM staff:

- Improve documentation during project monitoring, including documenting progress against planned activities, guidance on carrying out field monitoring visits, and prompt collection and processing of beneficiary lists and pre/post test results, to provide information that can improve implementation and to support both planned evaluations and informal reflection among project staff.
- Improve attention to rights and gender in the design of results and indicators, at a minimum through collection of gender-disaggregated data, and potentially also through rights-based and gender analysis and design of relevant results and indicators.
- Consider including in future projects capacity building support to IOM mobile teams on monitoring practices, gender training and rights-based approaches.
- Consider increasing the timeline for the procurement process to ensure that enough time is allocated to coordinate specific technical requirements.

### Recommendations for national partners:

- Consider integrating humanitarian border management content into other future trainings, as the trainees found it highly relevant, useful, and a crucial element for improving migration management practices.

### Recommendations for donors:

- Consider analysis of how support for the migration crisis could relate to and impact on broader development needs, and as possible include funding for those needs.

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